

**Comments
of
James M. Baker**

**"Listening Session on Aging"
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Iowa City, Iowa
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Good afternoon, Administrator Whitman, and members of the listening panel. My name is Jim Baker. I am a resident of Iowa City, and I am speaking today on my own behalf.

If you take anything away from this session today, I hope that it is the public's outrage with the cost-benefit analyses through which the EPA will decide whether and how to regulate against pollution.

It is Orwellian indeed that EPA would conduct cost-benefit analyses which balance industry costs against American lives.

When EPA decides whether or not to require an action to curb air pollution or clean up the water, your life, my life, and that of every American would receive a monetary value of \$3.7 million each.

If industry would have to spend more money on clean up than the value of the lives lost due to inaction, the pollution would continue to spill into the air and water.

Worse, misusing a very limited number of dubious "scientific" studies, EPA would set the value for an elderly American's life 37 percent lower at \$2.3 million.

It's disgraceful enough that the Bush administration would want to put any monetary price on our citizens' heads and health.

It's doubly so when any group of Americans is assigned a lower value, particularly those of us fortunate to be over 70 years of age.

I don't know about you, but I consider my head and health priceless. And I am furious that the Bush administration would assign me any crass dollar value whatsoever.

This issue is not academic, but has real consequences in the real world.

Administrator Whitman, you recently trumpeted a new "Clear Skies Initiative," which would actually allow old coal-fired power plants to go on belching air pollution for the foreseeable future.

Revisions to the federal Clean Air Act enacted during the elder Bush's administration envisioned a steady updating of our oldest and dirtiest power plants to higher standards.

New technologies have been emerging to clean up the smokestacks' emissions better and cheaper.

But suddenly the younger Bush's administration decided to pull the rug out from under our nation's steady progress on air quality, and did so using these cynical cost-benefit calculations.

Rubbing salt into the wound, you had the brass to call it "Clear Skies."

It's wrong for the Bush administration to put any dollar amount on an American's life and well-being, much less giving lower price tags to our elderly.

It's outrageous when the EPA does this in order to re-write environmental laws, and release polluting corporations from their legal responsibilities to stop fouling the air and water.

Ultimately all Americans -- regardless of age, regardless of profession and means, regardless of party affiliation -- want and deserve the same priceless public resources: clean air, pure water, fertile land, an abundance of wildlife and their natural habitats, and the legacy of such a healthy environment to pass on to future generations.

That's the people's work, and EPA is not getting it done.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.